

Portland Press Herald

Maine Sunday Telegram

HOME News Business Sports Arts Viewpoints Classified Obituaries Archive



Friday, June 26, 1998

SDMS DocID 469432

Harbor dredging awaits \$6 million

By John Richardson
Staff Writer

© Copyright 1998 Guy Gannett Communications

Superfund Records Center

SITE: Rogers Fibre

BREAK: 13.3

OTHER: _____

After four years of planning and environmental testing, the question of whether to dredge Portland Harbor this year is coming down to a question of money.

And the answer will come from a committee of U.S. senators and representatives assigned to tie up the loose ends of a \$1.7 trillion federal budget.

Final permits to dig up and dump the mud offshore, though not guaranteed, are expected to be ready in time to start the project in November. Dredging has the support of the entire industrial harbor, the cities of Portland and South Portland and even fishermen and environmentalists. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is about to invite bids from contractors.

However, the \$6 million to \$7 million to pay for it is clinging precariously to the massive federal budget proposal for fiscal 1999 that will be settled this summer.

"We've got everybody at the table and we've got a lot of excitement to make this go," said Tom Dobbins, manager of the Sprague Energy terminal on the South Portland side of the harbor. "The thing that scares me the most is it's going to lose steam if we wait a year."

As the quest for funds comes down to the wire, Maine's congressional delegation and governor are making final appeals to the key legislators. Gov. Angus King mailed a letter Thursday to the delegation and two other congressmen in position to influence the appropriation: Joseph McDade, R-Pa., and Vic Fazio, D-Calif.

"This project is crucial to safety with benefits to both the economy and environment of Maine," King wrote. "Until the harbor is dredged, new safer classes of double hulled vessels will not be able to access the Port of Portland. Further, the risk reductions from a new, wider drawbridge over the harbor will not be fully realized until the channel is properly dredged."

Portland Harbor's 35-foot deep ship channel was last dredged 14 years ago. Now that the new Casco Bay Bridge allows larger ships upriver with more room to maneuver, mounds of sediment have become the limiting factor and the most obvious hazard for navigation.

Local, state and federal officials started meeting in 1994 to coordinate the

— more

3

U.S. Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, brought the concerns to EPA officials.

"EPA's action will allow officials in Buxton - and residents who reside near the mill site - to breathe a little easier," Snowe said in a statement.

What will become of the riverfront property is unknown.

One idea may be to develop a park dedicated to millworkers. To sort through the options, the town already has a \$10,000 grant from the state office of community development to study how to reclaim and develop the land.

"We will be prepared to carry on after the EPA has done their work," Brandenstein said.

As for 90-year-old Agnes Wiggin, a lifelong resident of Salmon Falls, she would like to see nature restore itself to the riverbank.

"It was a wonderful thing to the town once, but it's now an eyesore and a danger," Wiggin said. "I don't think anything needs to be there. It should be left as it once was."

~~HOME | News | Business | Sports | Arts | Viewpoints | Classified | Obituaries | Archive~~

~~HOME | News | Business | Sports | Arts | Viewpoints | Classified | Obituaries | News
Archive~~

~~You can contact us at The Portland Newspapers.~~

~~To advertise on this site~~